

10 August 1950

RECORDED FOR: CHIEF, COMINT
ALLIED EXECUTIVE

FROM: Assistant Director, COM

SUBJECT: Centralized Facility for handling all
biographic data needed for foreign
intelligence purposes

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1. General Irwin's letter of 27 July 1950 to the Chairman of the IAC recommends "that the IAC initiate action to survey the field of personality files with a view to determining methods and procedures whereby (1) current security checks can be centralized, and, more important (2) lists and documents of individuals of intelligence and other military interest can be produced on demand in sufficient time to be of value to military commanders in the event of hostilities in any part of the world."

2. This is a formal request upon the IAC that its member organizations take steps right be taken to achieve a central biographic facility, handling all categories of biographic intelligence data. The need for such a facility has long been recognized, but this is the first time that anyone now performing biographic intelligence work has called for centralization.

3. There are three impediments, and three only so far as I know, which stand in the way of creating such a central "whole shot" unit. They are:

a. The existing and probably necessary problem between comint and overall personality files - a problem which exists in State and the Defense agencies as well as in CIA.

b. The lack of talent, manpower, and funds, of creating such a facility.

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c. Intentions.

d. Probably the first impediment is non-invariability. CIA itself would not run merge its overt and covert personality files, neither would State, and probably neither could any of the Defense agencies. But it is

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as I can conceiveable that all covert personality files might be brought together in OCO, and all overt files in Biographic Register, if the material means were available. This would be a very considerable step in the right direction. It would ensure that an inquiry addressed simultaneously to FBI, OCO and Biographic Register would tap all sources of information.

5. Lack of such an undertaking would be very great indeed, and it seems to me that only the Executive and the Director can decide whether or not such an expansion of CIA's personality files should be undertaken. I should not urge it myself, for the immediate future, because the Biographic Register is only now beginning to outgrow its adolescence and get settled on a reasonably firm basis. And if so were given the funds tomorrow, we should not have the space to put them in. But I believe the Agency should not dismiss the proposal at once as too costly and too impractical. Pressure for the creation of such a centralized facility will most surely grow from year to year, and if such a facility is ultimately to be developed it should be under CIA aegis.

6. United interests of the several agencies here seemed to be a hurdle. ODCI, or at any rate its A staff, is very jealous of its biographic unit and has hitherto reacted strongly against all suggestions looking toward a possible merger between it and Biographic Register. However, General Truist's letter is evidence that at least one of the IDC agencies is willing to consider giving up its vested interest in biographic files, and it is not impossible that other agencies might follow suit.

7. It is recommended, therefore, that the reply to General Truist's letter be couched in such terms as not to give the impression that CIA is brushing off his suggestion on grounds of cost, impracticability, or anything else. The attached version of your draft departs only in minor respects from the OASD original.

8. In view of the cost and manpower factors entering into this question I am sending a copy of this memorandum to the Acting Executive for his information.

JAMES M. HOPKINS

Ancl.

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